

Purpose Provide guidance on scheduling appointments for applicants and clients to assure optimal access and compliance with regulatory requirements.

State Policy Appointments will be scheduled for all clients at all clinics served by local agencies.

Local Agency Policy A written policy which addresses how appointments will be scheduled must be developed by each local agency and approved by the State WIC office before implementation. The following areas should be addressed:

- Number and type of appointments scheduled each hour
 - Communication between staff regarding changes and/or additions to the appointment schedule
 - What happens when clients are “late” for their appointment
 - Staggering of starting times and lunch times of staff when possible
 - How no-shows who call or walk-in are handled.
 - Flexibility in accommodating special circumstances.
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Check Issuance Appointments Appointments for check issuance may be given on a monthly or bi-monthly schedule, except for those categories identified for enhanced opportunities for nutrition education. See Volume III, Section E.

Late Appointments The appointment system should allow for flexibility in evaluating each situation (i.e. icy roads, car trouble, no sitter). Clients should not be penalized in these situations if they are "late for the appointment". Every effort should be made to provide benefits at the visit or to reschedule within a short (1 week) time frame. If it is not possible to work the client into another day within a week of the original appointment, mailing the checks should be considered.

**Working
Applicant/clients**

Special consideration will be given to working clients or applicants when scheduling appointments to minimize time absent from the workplace.

In areas with no or poor public transportation special consideration should be given to applicants/clients who do not work, but whose personal transportation is used by another family member who does work.

**New Applicant
Appointments**

All individuals wishing to participate in the program should have equal access to appointments. Individuals currently participating in the program should not receive preferential treatment in scheduling appointments. Once a client's certification period expires, that client becomes, in effect, a new applicant again.

A number of appointments on a daily or weekly basis, should be set aside for first time applicants.

Walk-Ins

Clients/applicants who walk-in for service without an appointment will be given an appointment for the earliest possible time. If no appointment is available for the current day an appointment will be offered another day at that site or at another clinic site. See Processing Standards, Volume I, Section B, for additional guidance.

**Call-In Requests for
Appointment**

Clients who call-in and request to schedule an appointment to apply for WIC benefits should be given the first available appointment. At a maximum, the time delay between phone call and appointment should be 30 days for a traveling clinic, and 15 days for a stationary clinic. If due to resources or space limitations the agency cannot schedule and process the applicant within these time frames the state office should be notified.

**Lack of Appointment
Slots**

The State WIC office may implement a waiting list for scheduling appointments. The local agency will use a categorical priority system for scheduling appointments. This system would proceed from pregnant or breastfeeding women to infants to children to non-breastfeeding postpartum women.

Overbooking

Consideration should be given to over-booking appointments. This can be effective in avoiding slack time due to no-shows. Tracking no-show rates for new and subsequent certification appointments is helpful in determining how and when to overbook.

Reminding Clients of Appointments

Agencies may wish to develop a system to remind persons who require expedited services (pregnant women, migrant, homeless) participants (by mail or telephone) of certification appointments. This is especially useful in decreasing no-show rates for first-time appointments.

Client Notification of Appointment Policies

The local agency shall clearly publicize/post appointment policies to inform all clients. Clients will be encouraged to notify the local agency to make appointments, to inform staff if they will be late or need to cancel an appointment.

Pregnant Women Who Miss Appointment

Local agencies shall attempt to contact each pregnant woman who misses her first WIC appointment to apply for WIC benefits.

At the initial contact, when scheduling the certification appointment staff should collect at a minimum the following information:

- Woman's address
- Phone number, or a number where she can be reached.

Agencies should have a procedure in place for notifying (card, letter, phone call) all pregnant women who no-show for their initial certification appointment. Documentation of this contact should be kept in the client's file.